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A

Hunt for a Happy Man:

AND THE

MIGHTY POWER OF MOTHERS.

TRANSLATED, OR RATHER PARAPHRASED FROM
THE FRENCH, WITH VARIATIONS
AND ADDITIONS,

BY P. SLAUGHTER, D. D.

41
“ Oh, Happiness! our being's end and aim!
Good, Pleasure, Ease, Content, whate'er thy name
That something still which prompts th' eternal sigh,
For which we bear to live, or dare to die,
Which still so near us, yet beyond us lies,
O'erlooked, seen double, by the fool and wise,
Plant of celestial seed! if dropped below,
Say in what mortal soil thou deign'st to grow.”

RICHMOND, VA:

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INSCRIPTION.

These Autumn Leaves are inscribed to the memory of
my honored friend, beloved brother, and Right Reverend
Father in God,

J. P. B. WILMER, D. D., LL.D.,

Who was "lovely and pleasant in his life," whose death
was a Translation, and whose Memory is a beautiful and
blessed Reminiscence—"like the Sweet South," breathing
through the Orange Groves of his own loving and beloved
Louisiana.

A STUDY OF THE ELEMENTS
OF
INDIVIDUAL AND NATIONAL HAPPINESS.

A few years ago I conceived the idea of studying *France*, of making myself acquainted with her soil, her monuments, her cities, her hamlets and that vast girdle of rivers, seas and mountains which is unrolled from the Pyrenees to the Alps, from the Mediterranean to the ocean.

I anticipated much pleasure from this course, and I was not disappointed. In the mildest climate I met intelligent people, and a singular abundance of all the good things of earth. I saw with admiration innumerable vessels enter our ports and pour into them the riches of all parts of the world. Thousands of wheel carriages distributed them here and there, promoting activity and prosperity.

Here the iron of Norway was heated and softened by the hammers of the forges. There, were displayed in tinted tissues, the wools of Spain and of Cachmere. A little further, workmen took the cotton of the Indies, spun it, wove it and printed upon it every color. I found everywhere old cloisters and abbeys transformed into factories, and their deep vaults resounding with the songs of the workmen and the perpetual clatter of the steam-engines. I was charmed with such teeming prosperity. What surprised me most was the impulse given to the whole country by the education of an insect. From north to south, from Italy to the volcanic mountains of Viverais, a caterpillar awakened activity everywhere. At Avignon and Vancluse they strip

the cocoons. In Normandy the practiced fingers of the women attach the threads to light spindles and cast a thousand beautiful figures upon the airy net-work of our beautiful blondes. At Etiennes these threads are woven into ribbons which are unrolled over the whole surface of Europe. At Nismes they make of them stuffs which rustle and shine like metals. At Lyons they are displayed in thick velvets, in gauze transparent as air and brilliant as snow—in satin, in damask and in lampas. At Paris, silk rivals the pencil, even to the reproduction upon sumptuous hangings of the chief works of the great masters.

But these *chef-d'œuvres* of art—these prodigies of industry—what are they in comparison with the blessings which nature lavishes? We have all climates and all cultures. At the north we have the larch and the fir; at the south the olive, the citron and the orange—the two extremities of the botanic chain. The trees of Persia and of the two Americas, are mingled with the fœdal ash and oaks of old Gaul; the fragrant fruits of Asia with the native apple tree; the entire flora of the east with the humble violet, the easter-daisy and the mysterious verbena. Thus France is covered with the products of the new world and the treasures of the old. From the height of her hills, covered with vines, rivers of wine run perpetually into the mouths of all people, while over the broad fields harvests wave like the waves of the sea.

At the sight of so many blessings my heart leaped with joy. I exclaimed, “Oh, *nimum fortunata!* [too happy people!] you have everything—riches, intelligence, liberty. Is there on the earth a spectacle comparable to your glory? You have stripped yourself of superstitions as one casts off his old clothes; no more useless monks, no more caste, nor slavery, no more rival and jealous provinces. I see in your bosom but one people, and in this people but one family.” And in saying this I seemed to hear everywhere the hymn of gratitude which my own heart was singing.

Alas! I scarce dare write it—in this land of promise, in the midst of these families, loaded with blessings which should make life sweet and easy, I found only little children, those frail creatures, unconscious as the birds of heaven, who seemed truly happy. As to the rest, young and old, in town and country, seemed to be burdened with an internal malady which left them no repose. From the bosom of the fields, the laborer casts upon the towns an eye of envy and of hatred. In the midst of his gardens and his parks the rich man cried, "*Me miserable!*"—the merchant complained of the course of trade, the working man of his wages, the banker of policies, and all bewailed their social position. The higher one mounts the more bitter are the words, the louder the murmurs. Unbelief has entered into the things of earth, as into the things of heaven. The physician no longer believes in medicine, the judge in the Constitution, the priest in his creed, the soldier in glory, the young man in love, nor kings in royalty. To cap the climax we are told that it is the wise man (not the fool) who says there is no God; "the Bible is a myth, the world is a machine, and man is a monkey. 'Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die,' and after death, nothing!"

This industrious people, who at first sight seemed to me but one happy family, on a nearer view now seems but one miserable being, who hides under a rich dress the most hideous wounds, and ennui, that profound void, under the glare of a factitious gaiety.

Wonder having ceased, an active and burning pity seized my soul. I sought the cause of the malady, and I thought I found it in the want of education and of leisure. To give leisure, what was wanting but to invent machines, to supplement the strength of men. And for education, to multiply schools, invent methods of instruction and distribute books, magazines and newspapers. Young then, and doubting nothing, I went to work. I had made some studies for

the Polytechnic school, of which I was Professor of History. I became a geometrician, mechanic, chemist, &c. I procured all the new inventions and multiplied them. In thought I saw France covered with railways and her fields cultivated without fatigue. I had machines to dig up the forests and to cultivate the earth. With a little coal and a few drops of water, I lighted the towns, gave coursers to our cars, wings to the vessels, fingers to machines. I made them spin, weave, forge and print. They produced like thinking beings, needles, paper, canon, clothes, furniture and thousands of other things, without fatigue. While steam worked, man rested and enjoyed himself.

Leisure being found, it became necessary, for improving the mind, to study the systems of instruction and methods of education, substituting new ideas for old ones—to propagate Jacotot Fourier, mutual instruction, &c.

The most enlightened men took charge of popular education, and I adopted their systems. Thousands of public schools were opened, but it was useless to teach people to read, without furnishing them with books. Then we set up public libraries, printed compact editions of Rousseau and other classics for the cottagers, illustrated magazines and encyclopedias at two sous.

Thus exhausted by labor, and seeing my health failing, I became restless. I began to fear that I should not enjoy the fruit of the tree watered by the sweat of my brow. Must I, then, die on the eve of such a beautiful success and abandon the idea of seeing France regenerated and happy? I sent for my physician, a conscientious and sensible man, and showed him the heap of old dusty papers around me. I laid before him at length the cause of my illness, my hopes and my fears, and my life wasted with thought. "And what does all this mean?" said he with an oblique and ironical air. "To regenerate France," I meekly replied. "And to accomplish this," he said, "one must have places,

power, money and a high position in the world." "Nothing of all that, Doctor." "Be easy, then," said he, "your malady is not grave; a little rest and country air will restore you."

I settled myself two leagues from Versailles, in a great plain whose golden harvests sparkled in the sun. A suite of smiling valleys opened before me, whose green meadows were prolonged in the distance, between cliffs covered with rich culture and crowned by a grove of old chestnut trees. Upon the border of these woods rises the beautiful village of Chateaufort, with its rural steeples and its Gothic tombs, placed like two bastions under the picturesque ruins of the castle of Hugues le Cadavre; and in the midst of all this, a simple, small house, well shaded, very rustic, and inhabited by a family of the olden time, whose friendship offered me an asylum. I passed there two long years, occupied with my health, and, above all, with my projects—associated myself with all the doings of the philanthropists for the diffusion of useful knowledge, and encouraging my friends in the pursuit of the great work of universal regeneration. Thank God, the end was not long in coming, but it came in direct contradiction to my hopes.

The more education was diffused, the more the unhappiness increased; knowledge irritated instead of softening, and the evil I could not deny, for it pursued me in my solitude. The beautiful village had a school with all the improvewents of the age, and instruction and leisure should have multiplied enjoyment. But, alas! I heard there only complaints and regrets. Some old men lamented the loss of the lord, who, once a year, used to receive the farmer at his table—others, less proud, regretted the monks, who distributed soup at the door of the convent; the aristocrats were offended at seeing in the valley the sumptuous parks of men who had become rich by trade; the poor envied the rich and demanded an agrarian law, the abolition of taxes,

and a Republic where all should be on a dead level of equality. Finally, young men just out of college declared that knowledge and good sense only dated from their coming into the world, and that the country was—the young men—with a profound contempt for all the rest. Such was a picture, in miniature, of France.

This, I said to myself, is a painful experience, and should make the advocates of progress pause and think. I found that in proportion as intelligence increased riches morality was impoverished, and in the empty heads sophisms and envy sprung up with thought. Thus I had misunderstood France, or misconceived the remedy; I was confounded; my first impulse was to burn up the books, tear up the journals, annihilate industry, and root up the fatal tree of knowledge. I was driven to the extreme of thinking that what is called the people, with some peculiar exceptions, were made to crawl in baseness and error; that despots did well to terrify this indocile animal; that monks had been right to cut him off from the number of thinking beings; that it was only by keeping them in the chains of ignorance and poverty that their bad passions could be subdued, and that they must be ruled like the brutes by hunger and fear, since they would not be made happy, like the angels, by light and love.

Full of these thoughts, like another Machiavel I transformed them into a system, when a singular circumstance suddenly modified them. At the bottom of the valley, on the right, may be seen to-day an elegant house, so beautifully situated, that the woods, the hills, the fields and the cottage seem like natural accidents to the park and the garden. Near the house is a village-school, well shaded, whose like can only be found in the romances of *La Fontaine*; opposite is a bridge over the brook, overlooked by a mill, made as if to please the eye and furnish a subject for the landscape painter; then there is a little chapel, where reposes under a modest marble monument the lady of the

place, who died in the flower of her age, but whose piety and beauty have left sweet memories. The group of woods, of houses, rural steeple, and two Gothic turrets, form a delightful scene in the midst of a profound solitude, for the road is chiefly trodden by the feet of flocks and herds which animate the valleys.

Every Sunday, warned by the church bell, I attended service. It was a charming sight to see the villagers in their simple dress, at the same hour, from all parts of the valley, traverse the meadows. It happened, however, that sometimes I had a companion. He was an old man, whose ardent and ingenuous piety I never wearied in admiring. In spite of his plain clothes, and some indications of his being poor, everything in his person expressed a calm, which, by an inexpressible charm, passed from his soul to mine as I gazed upon him. My curiosity being awakened I made some inquiries, and was told that in his old age he had lost two brave boys in battle, who would have been his stay and comfort. One was killed at Waterloo, and the other fell at Beresina, and their mother soon followed them. Here he was, old and alone, and not able to work. Encouraged by these recitals I sought his company.

"You must be very lonesome," I said, "without a companion."

"How can one be lonesome," said he, with an humble air, "who has God for his guest? God has promised to take up his abode with those who love Him and keep His commandments. Refreshing as congenial company is, one can do without it, if need be, who can speak to God, and to whom God deigns to speak."

"But," I continued, "you have need of warmer clothing; the winter will be rough; you should think of it before hand."

"If I could work," he replied, "I would gladly make my bread by the sweat of my brow, according to God's com-

mands, but in my situation I have no more need of over-anxiety than the birds who cannot sow, and the flowers which cannot spin. God puts care for me in the hearts of good people."

"Here seems to be a happy man," said I to myself, "and I must interrogate him further."

"Can you read?" said I; "and have you books?"

"Yes," said he, "I have read many books, and I have a library of many books in one—it is *the* book, beginning at the beginning and ending at the end of the world, with a few glimpses of the new heavens and the new earth; but at my age one does not read much, one prays."

"And do you pray often?"

"Yes; it is a great happiness to pray, and one prays often in his heart without uttering words. And often one says the Lord's Prayer, which one loves the more, because he first learned it from his mother's lips."

"And is this all your prayer?" I asked.

"What needs one more?" he replied. "As the Bible is many books in one, so is the Lord's Prayer many prayers in one. Each petition, if dwelt upon, until one sees and feels its meaning, fills the soul, and overflows the earth and time. Sometimes after uttering the words, 'Our Father,' I pause, and seeing the flocks which come from the fields to give us milk, and the sun which rises and sets upon the valley, I bless God for His light and warmth, which makes the grass grow in the meadows. Oh! then I feel that my prayer is true, and I have but to think all the evening of the import of the words, 'Our Father.'"

"And in the bad weather what do you do?" I asked.

"I look at the clouds which pass across the heavens, coming (I know not whence) on the wings of the wind, and pouring rain upon the fields, to give us bread and butter and honey, neither more nor less than God sees good for us, and knowing that man does not live by bread alone, I bless

Him for these and for that bread which came down from heaven for the redemption and nourishment and solace of our souls."

"But," said I (to try him), "some men who call themselves wise men, say there is no God."

"A blind man," said he, "may deny the sun, and yet the sun shines on, and shines upon and blesses the blind man who denies Him. The god of this world (not our Father in heaven) has blinded the eyes of some men that they cannot see things which are revealed unto babes. A man, whose eyes are open, sees God even in a blade of grass, which the earth bears, and which the air and the rains and the sun nurses. Can the wise men see the milk and honey lying hid in the grass, and the bloom which the bee and the cattle find strewn into the food which nourishes them and us? Only an All-wise, Almighty and All-Good God could have made such provision. No wonder the sweet Psalmist called upon all the works of the Lord, from the greatest to the least, to praise Him; for He spake the word, and they were made, and gave them a law, which has never been broken. No; our Father will live forever. Men cannot kill Him as they killed my poor boys."

In speaking thus, the old man's eyes were filled with tears, he bowed his head, and I heard him murmur in a low tone, as if continuing his prayer.

"My poor Bertrand," he resumed, after a moment of silence, "he was the youngest, and was killed at Waterloo, crying, '*Vive* Napoleon.' Ah! if he had cried '*Vive* our Father who art in heaven,' he might have been living now. And my poor wife, who went down sorrowing to her grave, I might not have lost her; but it was the will of our Father who art in heaven, and I bless Him. 'The Lord gave and He hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord.' And now I know this prayer is true."

"You ought," I said, "to come nearer the village, you are too lonely here."

"Ah," he replied, "I cannot leave this house—here I saw my children born, and their mother die, and God has said 'I will never leave you, nor forsake you,' and his angels minister to me."

"And you are content with your lot?" I said.

"How could I be otherwise? It is God's will, and I pray every day that God's will may 'be done on earth as it is done in heaven.'"

Thus was discovered to me the secret of happiness. He who merges his will in the will of God, has found the long sought philosopher's stone, which turns all it touches into gold. He becomes a co-worker with God, and all things in heaven and earth do His will.

"Oh, you deserve to be still more happy," I said, "my brave, good man. Here, take this purse, and pray for me, for me who have had no such trials as you, and who dare not say I am happy like you."

"And is it that one gives prayers for money?" he said, with emotion.

I felt that I had wounded him. "Pardon me," I cried, "I was only like the rest of the world, making a self-interested offering." I seized his pious hands, which I pressed with a holy respect. I then went away with a heart full of emotion, and as I went I heard him say—

"I will pray for you and for your children, if you have any who do not yet know how to pray for themselves."

It is said of the great astronomer, Tycho-Brahé, that one night, in going from his observatory, he suddenly found himself surrounded by a tumultuous crowd, who filled the public grounds. Inquiring the cause of this great concourse, they showed him in the constellation of the Sevan, a brilliant star, which he, aided by the best tel-

escape, had not yet seen. Such are the incidents which humble wise men and advance science. My situation was very like that of the great astronomer. A poor old man had shown me the star which I had vainly sought for so many years.

Yes, I was deceived; it is not industry, nor science, nor machines, nor books which can make a nation happy. Certainly all these things are useful in their places, and it should be the care of legislators to propagate and multiply them; but if content with developing the intelligence whose sphere is wholly material, you neglect to develop the soul, the divine element of humanity—instead of a happy people, you will see around you but a multitude, restless in its unbridled passions—a multitude tortured by a double need of rising and of knowing, and these sublime instincts will be their tormentors.

You have pointed their eyes to the earth; they attach themselves to it in the midst of riches and pleasures whose pursuit exhaust without satisfying them. Why do you not first lift their eyes to heaven, and show them the way that leads to its open gates? The soul only can see God, and once awakened, discerns with surprise the end of the desires which had deceived it, and of the ambitions which had led it astray. The best educated and most prosperous, if not the most religious, will never be the king-people.

The example of an old man, happy in his poverty, calm in his afflictions, had led me to the source of good and of evil. Our earthly passions is the tree of knowledge; they materialize us if the soul does not make them divine. I perceive now that the isolated developments of the intelligence have increased instead of destroying the moral evil in the world, which is the cause of unhappiness here and hereafter. What more frightful spectacle can there be than

that of an active and vigorous people struggling with each other for riches, honors, pleasures and social position, within the brazen walls of a false glory and selfish egotism, living without God in the world and without hope beyond it.

This spectacle we see in the world because the *religious thought* is wanting, and the religious thought is wanting, mainly, because mothers forget to put it into the hearts of their children in the cradle and the nursery. For, as said great Jean Paul Richter, "all first things last forever with a child, and though man should circumnavigate the globe, he will be less influenced by all that he has seen and heard than by his nurse."

The first Napoleon, seeing France sunk in sensuality and unbelief, said one day to Madam Campan, "The old systems of education are worth nothing; what is wanting to the better bringing up of the young in France?" "*Mothers*," she responded. The suggestion pleased the Emperor, his brow beamed with thought for a moment, and he exclaimed, "Here is a system of education in one word. Madam, let it be your mission to make mothers who know how to rear their children."

The god of nature is wise; he does not confide us at our birth to the care of a pedagogue or of a philosopher, but to the love and the caresses of a mother. He surrounds our cradle with the most gracious forms and the sweetest sounds—for the sweet voice of woman is sweeter still, when she modulates it to the ear of her infant.

Nature lavishes everything that is charming upon our infancy. We go to sleep upon a mother's bosom, are awaked by her kisses and inspired by her love. Religion is not at first a creed, but an inspiration, and the heart of the mother is the first and purest organ through which it passes to the heart of the child; patience responds to curi-

osity, mildness to petulance, and such are the contrasts and the harmonies that the two reasons seem to grow together.

Man comes afterwards, and breaks this chain of love. The smile of the mother is succeeded by the frown of a master. Expelled from this paradise, the child goes to bed without embracing his mother; he rises without hearing that gentle voice which called him to prayer. She is not there to pray with him. Years pass, and the tendrils of his affections too often either creep on the earth, or are twined around other objects, and he comes back to his home—his purity not always, but too often, soiled, his mind sophisticated by false reasonings, and his heart intoxicated with illusions. Most great and good men have derived their first impulse towards good from their mothers. Nothing lingers in our memories like those hours when our mothers joined our little hands together, kneeling at her knees, and taught us to say, "Our Father who art in Heaven." This echo of the maternal voice comes back to us in our hours of grief and of gloom like the strains of far off music.

In the cemetery of Mount Parnassus is a tomb with this touching inscription:

"Rest in peace, oh! my mother, y'r son will always obey you."

Oh! mothers, if you had but a glimpse of the marvels of maternal influence, with what ardor would you enter a career which nature has opened to you. Most men are overwhelmed in the whirlpool of business and of politics. The fate of generations to come is mainly in your hands. The hearts of your children are laid before you like a blank sheet of paper, to write upon it the rudiments of its history. What I can only put on this cold paper you can engrave with the pen of the diamond forever. You who make so many sacrifices, and descend to the humblest details for the

health of the body. Will you, can you, hesitate when the unconscious soul of your helpless child cries for the light and the bread and the water of life?

The education of the body and of the mind is sure to be cared for by others. But who will care for the soul if the mother does not? This much, at least, every mother can do. She can see that the frail bark, with its precious treasure, does not leave the home port and be launched upon the sea of life without a compass and without a chart; and she can point the young pilot to that star in the heavens by which he must steer his course if he would not be drawn into the whirlpool or dashed against the rocks, to which so many sirens lure the unwary with their bewitching songs.

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RICHMOND, VA:

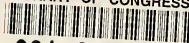
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